At an early age, a girl begins to wear a number of braids, and, save when undone in the bath, this type of coiffure is retained until death. The number of braids varies, and is usually about ten. The hair is regularly stained a reddish colour with henna whose use, in addition to being purely customary, is said "to fortify the scalp." In some houses, kohl, a finely powdered sulphide of antimony moistened with water, is applied to blacken the edges of the eye. European cosmetics and perfumes appear in most of the wealthier homes, and younger women paint their lips and nails. Reddening the hands and feet with henna, a custom for both sexes at a wedding, is not an everyday practice. The so-called "Baghdad boil," reported to be caused by larvae laid by a type of fly in the skin, usually of the face, is the bane of women in cities such as Baghdad or Mosul because of its hideous scar. It is not found in this area, nor is the technique used to prevent it from occurring on the countenance, artificial infection of the ankle or calf of a child. For menstruation clean pieces of rag are used as towels, and sexual intercourse is prohibited during the period. The cloths are commonly washed and reused. Tattooing is denied by most men to be done by women of the town, but it is possible to observe daily female residents of the lower classes with blue dots or marks inscribed on their faces. These are either transient servants or migrants from the villages where the use of tattooing is frequent. In the

302 [515]

164 951

841 [833]

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in dresses in the dining room or bedroom in manifestation of the host's economic standard, were kept in this room, which thus became more a treasury than a familiar room. The articles of value set locked in there were carried on the person in the form of jewels. Wealth was hung on oneself and not impersonalized in the form of a costly piece of furniture or a valuable painting. This explains the striking contrast between the expensively clothed, be-jewelled women and their remarkably bare homes.

The flexibility of the Kurdish home must also be viewed in relation to the prevailing sleeping habits. To sleep was a family affair[1]. Lodging a married couple withdrew to one of the other rooms. There was no undressing when going to bed or lying down to rest on the rolled-out mattress. The women slept in the same clothes they had worn during the day, with the exception of the turban of the married women, which was replaced by a light veil tied round the face and neck. The men slept in their home clothes, which might be pants and shirt, or, in the case of the more modernistic, who followed the customs of Baghdad, pyjamas - though not in the sense of a garment for the night. In Baghdad and in the provinces the Indian pyjama had returned, via Europe, to the Near East as a day and home garment. In Kurdistan it became day dress which was kept on when one went to bed. Nor was there any special morning or evening toilet. Ablutions were performed in order to reach a ritually pure state, and were, like most of the daily life, closely connected with the demands of Islam. The greater or lesser washing of the body whereby one reaches a ritually pure state, prior to prayer, is hardly personal hygiene as we understand it. Mouth, nose and hands were carefully cleansed after each meal, and the genitals were washed each time nature had been relieved, simply described by my interpreter as "to go to the water". Where prior to the five daily prayers the small ablution, must be performed, which comprises the washing of face, hands, forearm and feet, and then passing the wet hand over the hair, not to mention the big cleansing of the whole body that must be done, for example, after menstruation or sexual intercourse[2], there is no need for any further morning or evening toilet.

Clothes were changed during the day if an urge was felt to do so, or if it was considered that the clothes one had on had become dirty or were not fresh enough. The term "going to bed and getting up" thus had nothing to do with dressing and undressing.

The lighting, even in so large a house and with such a numerous family, was confined to a big pressure lamp and a couple of smaller "kitchen lamps". The larger lamp hung during the day on a nail in the wall of the central room, and when darkness fell it was placed as a luminous centre of the family circle where this had "pitched camp", whether on the roof, in the courtyard, or in the central room. The lamp was placed on the ground or on one of the small, angular smoking tables. As lighting it was garish and most inadequate, which did not seem to worry the people who were able to work in the workrooms by the light of a fire, or to wash at the garden basin in the evening by the light of the moon or the stars, and whose eyes were not accustomed to adequate light from several sources. One was quite used to being, and performing the evening tasks, in semi-darkness when outside the radius of the crude light from the lamp. In the day house of the village aristocracy sporadic European elements could be found: mirrors, battery wireless receivers with velvet covers (only heard on the

783 in common with them. This great feeling of religious affinity dissipates any sense of loneliness and
791 desolation. Five times a day it is the duty of a woman to wash herself and arrange her dress, and to
concentrate on something other than her monotonous labours, a right and a duty to withdraw into
herself, and to demand this respected by all in the vicinity. It behoves up a person's self-esteem to
know that five times a day one can demand a square metre's space and 3-4 minutes, during which no
disturbance is allowed, not even from the naughtiest child, that in this space a person's spiritual self
is isolated from its surroundings, yet at one with millions of others praising God, a unity that transcends race and frontiers.

788 The duty to give alms is the pillar of Islam most closely paralleled in our own society until recently
431 welfare took over most forms of private charity.

785 The fast, like the five daily prayers, is a method of being included in a great spiritual and religious fellowship. By subjecting oneself to the wants of comrades to the same physical deprivations and suffering as the other adherents to Islam a feeling of solidarity, of affinity, is engendered.

981 For those fortunate to be able to make it, the pilgrimage is a form of foreign travel that has no
491 counterpart elsewhere. Once more it means entering a great religious association, endowing with other
781 the rigours of the journey and with them assuming a state of sanctity or initiation. The way in which
562 pilgrimage constitutes a series of ecstatic experiences which women and men who have taken part in them agree to talk about. These experiences set their mark on the soul and are later outwardly manifested by the clothing rules referred to. In the five daily prayer periods, in the thirty days of the fast, and on the days of pilgrimage, women enter the great congregations of the orthodox on an equal footing with men. These events are such a break in the daily life that they must be considered a spiritual luxury, quite incompatible with the wretched life pattern of our industrialised community. The demands made by Islam on the time of the individual cannot be reconciled with our Western rhythm of life. In return, these demands give to daily life a spiritual content extremely difficult of replacement by anything else whatever. When even a hard-working housewife like the young woman I saw in Kurdistan, whose daily work covered husband, child, house, mulberry plantation and the milling of grain twice daily on the mountains, felt that she had the right to take the time to say her daily prayers before going to sleep, during dough for bread making or before loading the heavy goatskin of water on her back, it must give her a feeling of human worth in the middle of her inhuman labours. She possessed the right and the duty to collect herself five times daily, to be silent and to consider spiritual matters, and nothing in the world could deprive her of this. It is not surprising that the Islamic Kurdish women conducted themselves with calm and dignity. So long as certain inviolable areas of time and thought exist for them, the daily drudgery will never be able to engulf them entirely.

● 841 Embroidery. During menstruation the women in the educated and emancipated milieus in Baghdad (from whom I derived information) used home-made rectangular sanitary towels made out of several layers of cotton material with tapes at the four corners. The tapes were tied together two by two so that the towel was suspended from the woman's hips. The towel was not used as a support in any

4) Shaiken E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

Kurdish articles of clothing. It was said that the sanitary towels were washed by the young women herself in private, but were publicly hung out to dry with all other articles of clothing.

Menstruation and menarche in this connection were mainly a problem for the young unmarried girl. The long nursing period and successive pregnancies made the question of menstruation less topical for the married women than is the case in our culture. During menstruation a woman is ritually unclean. She must not enter a holy place[1] (see p. 139), must not touch the Coran, which is the reason why it is hung up in the bedroom in a pouch specially sewn for it[2] (see p. 136). Only the big ablution of the whole body can make the woman ritually pure at the end of the menstruation period[3]. The big ablution is also necessary for married couples after intercourse in order to comply with the rules governing prayer (see p. 37). In consequence the family is kept informed as regards sexual relations[4].

Sejkan among the Kurds. "They are happy", said both the Arab mayor of Sekhmami and the Arab qa'im maqām of Kaiya with a mixture of contempt and horror about the sheikh families in Tiqqarra and Sergalu. The heads of these two sheikh families were brothers, both married to women born in Sergalu. The sister-in-law of the one was married to the old sheikh at Sheikhi, lying in the valley between Charmahmud and the mountain of Pira Magrun. I was told that it was difficult to obtain much information about this sect. Those who had joined it in the hope of learning something about it, had later not wished to divulge its character and the rites connected with it, which were surrounded by the greatest secrecy. My interpreter suggested that as far as she was aware these consisted of deviations from the general Islamic rules governing decency, but could or would not supply any further information about these mysteries.

It was, however, he stated that it is not a matter of followers of Ahlu Haqq, the People of the Divine Truth, known in western Iran as Ali-Ilahi, whose adherents in Kurdistan are called Kaka'i and are found particularly in the district of Kirkuk, but on the contrary of an offshoot of the Sufi dervish order[5] Naqshbandi[6], Naqshbandiyah[7], founded in Bukhara in the 14th century by Muhammad Baha-ud-Din or Baha-uddin, and brought to Kurdistan in the 19th century by Sheikh Mawlana Khalid of the Jaf tribe. By him Kak Ahmadi, grandfather of Sheikh Mahmud, was later introduced to the Sufi "way", which gradually penetrated deep into remote districts of Southern Kurdistan.

According to Cornell[8], a group of Naqshbandi followers formed under Haji Sheikh Arif a secret society for the practice of sejkan. The meeting place of the sect was the village mosque. In the basement of this building, intended for ritual ablution, men and women bathed together naked. Later they wandered together to the mountains.

According to Edmonds[9] it was a certain Sheikh Abdul Karim of Sheikhi, near Sergalu, a relative of the Haji Sheikh Arif above-mentioned, who was said to have researched or founded the "way" called "Sejkan". This "way" was based on an ancient document "The Dawn of the Mystics", and represented a radical deviation from the Islamic commandments laid down in the holy law, and the rules of duty. This "way" included transvestitism, bathing in common of men and women in the basin of the mosque, also in company with dogs, the wandering in the mountains of young men and women together, ceremonies where bowls of urine were passed from hand to hand by those present, or a